



Building our communities one small business at a time...

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Networking - The Key to Lifetime Work



Networking is an invaluable tool that anyone in the business world can utilize. Effective networking can be your best form of marketing, as well as being extremely affordable. To give a definition of networking, networking occurs when there is a planned event or gathering with the primary goal of connecting with others. The purpose of networking can vary based on one's own agenda, yet the primary focus is to meet people, and have people meet you. In other words, you have the opportunity to market yourself and your business in a relaxed, social situation. This often proves to be a comfortable situation for all involved.

There are many opportunities to network in virtually every community on some scale. For a new owner of a small business, usually the most productive starting point would be to contact a local chamber of commerce, or other organization that suits your field of business. Most chambers of commerce and professional organizations have membership dues that can be a considerable amount of money. To make sure that the organization is right for you before you join and pay dues, it is usually acceptable to request to visit the group first as a guest at no charge. This will enable you to get to know the group, get the "feel" of the group, and make sure it is right for you without putting out any money first.

You may want to visit, and possibly join, several chambers or organizations, but whatever you choose to do, it will only be effective if you use it. Regular attendance at the meetings is extremely important for effective networking. As you attend the meetings, you will be recognized by more and more people, as well as getting to know more and more people, and this facilitates you reaching your goal. People will know you and your company, and refer to you, and you will do the same for them to reciprocate. Personal referrals and "word of mouth" advertising is invaluable and highly effective.

To make the most of your networking meeting, here are a few guidelines you should follow:

- **Arrive early.** If you are there before the mass of the group, you are assured the maximum opportunity to meet everyone.
- **Arrive with a goal in mind.** Before the meeting, set a goal for yourself for that day, and then achieve it. Don't arrive at the meeting feeling lackadaisical, or

unfocused. Take some time for yourself to get yourself focused before the meeting.

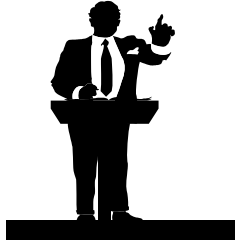
- **Make sure you have writing materials and plenty of business cards and/or brochures.**
- **Make sure you have a purse or briefcase** to deposit the materials and business cards into that you will accumulate.
- **Make sure to shake hands when introduced, or when you introduce yourself.**
- **Don't huddle up with co-workers or friends.** It is easier to be approached by others if you don't appear to be busy with idle conversation.
- **Don't be afraid to approach people you don't know and introduce yourself.**
- **Wear a name tag or business card.**
- **Don't hard sell yourself or your company.** Networking meetings are to be social and semi-informal/relaxed.
- **Do your best to remember names of individuals you have met.**

While it is important to prepare for your meeting by following the preceding criteria, it is also very important to prepare by making sure your personal appearance is appropriate for the gathering. Your appearance is the first thing people notice. Unfortunately, lasting impressions can be formed about you or your company before you even open your mouth based solely on your appearance. Because of this, it is important to pay attention to this detail. Most importantly: be yourself. If you are comfortable with your appearance, your confidence will surely be a benefit.

After the meeting, it is important that you follow up with the people you have met in a timely manner. If someone was interested in your company, don't wait two or three weeks to drop them a line; they may have forgotten you by then. Also, it is very important to follow through on any promises you may have made. If you told someone you would call them with some information, make sure you do it! It is very important to be credible and reliable in order for your networking efforts to be truly fruitful.

Networking can be costly in fees, dues, luncheons, etc., but if done effectively, it can prove to be an invaluable investment in your business's success.

SPEAKER'S BUREAU



Do you need a Speaker for your organization?

Topics Include:

- SBA... Who we are and what we do
- How to start or expand a small business
- The "Five C's of Credit" and why they are important in getting a loan
- Do you need a loan? How to build a relationship with an SBA lender
- How to contract with the U.S. government
- Federal government certifications:
 1. 8(a) Business Development
 2. Small Disadvantaged Business Certification
 3. HUBZones

Participating Agencies and Organizations:

- U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)
- Business Information Center (BIC)
- Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)
- Nevada MicroEnterprise Initiative (NMI)
- Women's Business Center (WBC)

Free Business Counseling and Information
For Speaker Information, call Donna Hopkins @
(702) 388-6684.

Mark Your Calendar...



U.S. Small Business Administration
Nevada District Office,
U.S. Department of Housing and
Urban Development and Fannie Mae
Present

Financial Resources and Contracting with the
Federal Government

at the
Texas Station Conference Center
on

Wednesday, June 23, 2004

from
7:00 am- 3:00 pm



50 YEARS OF SERVICE
To
AMERICA'S SMALL BUSINESS

THE U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, 1953-2003

Since its founding on July 30, 1953, the U.S. Small Business Administration has delivered about 20 million loans, loan guarantees, contracts, counseling sessions and other forms of assistance to small businesses.

It's That Time Again...

The Annual Small Business Awards Luncheon will be held Tuesday, June 8, at the Gold Coast and Casino. Outstanding small business owners will be honored by the SBA, the Nevada Business Development Center, SCORE and the Nevada Microenterprise Initiative, along with various Chambers of Commerce and the National Association of Women Business Owners.

Tickets will be \$35 each or \$325 for a table of ten. The award winners will be announced towards the end of April 2004.

For more information, contact Donna Hopkins at (702) 388-6684.

SBA's Mission

Maintain and strengthen the nation's economy by aiding, counseling, assisting and protecting the interests of small businesses and by helping families and businesses recover from national disasters.

SBA's Guiding Principles

Our people inspire creativity in the American economy by developing and supporting entrepreneurs through a vast network of resource partners.

We advocate for all small businesses by taking leadership in building a productive partnership between the American people and its government.

Our team focuses on delivering results for small business, being accountable, accessible and responsive.

We empower the spirit of entrepreneurship within every community to promote and realize the American dream.

We facilitate the environment necessary for America's small businesses to succeed, measuring our performance by small business success.